THE DOG AND THE WOLF

THE BYELORUSSIAN
FOLK
FAIRY-TALE

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Translated
from the Byelorussian
by A. WEISE

Drawings by
I. NEKRASOV

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Once there was a man who kept a dog. The dog served his master well, but he was beginning to grow old. His eyesight was getting bad and it was hard for him to keep watch over his master's goods and chattels.

Then his mistress, a miserly woman, stopped giving him any food and finally ordered him to clear out of the yard.

"Wretched life this," the dog thought. "I'd better go and have the wolf eat me up."

Having made his decision, he went to the forest to look for the wolf.

He walked and walked through the forest and ran into the wolf.

"Where are you going, dog?"

"To you."

"What for?"

"For you to eat me up, old fellow."

And he told the wolf about the trouble he was in.

Now the wolf saw how thin the dog was — so thin that one could break one's teeth on him — and said:

"No, I'm not going to eat you up right now. You might as well get a little fatter."

"How can I get fatter," the dog replied, "when my mistress won't give me any food?"

"Oh, that doesn't matter. Well, we'll think up something that'll make her eager to fatten you."

"Nothing doing," the dog said, wagging his tail, "my mistress is terribly greedy."

"Do as I tell you", the wolf said, "go home and stay in the kitchen garden. Tonight as it begins to get dark I'll come round and carry away the best sucking-pig. You kick up a row and follow me and I'll give it up to you. When your master sees that he'll order his wife to feed you well. In a month, when you have fattened up, I'll eat you."

The dog thought a little and gave his consent.

That night the wolf came, seized a sucking-pig and carried it across the kitchen gardens.

The whole household was in an uproar as the dog rushed after the wolf.

The master popped out of the hut and saw the wolf dragging the pig across the kitchen gardens. Then he saw the dog overtake the wolf.

"Tally-ho!" the master shouted with all his might. "Lyska! Sick him!"

The wolf instantly left the sucking-pig behind and took to his heels.

"Well-done, Lyska!" the master cried. He took the dog to the kitchen and ordered his wife to give him plenty to eat.

Now Lyska lived in clover. And in a month he became so fat that his hair looked sleek and glossy. And he forgot all about his deal with the wolf.

One day the master had company. They all had drinks, made merry and sang songs. Lyska had his own share — under the table there was a heap of bones thrown to him.

Lyska ate his fill and went to his kennel. And there in the kennel he saw the wolf waiting for him.

"What are you doing here?" the dog asked.

"I've come for you," the wolf replied. "Don't you remember our agreement?"

The dog got frightened — he would not like to be prey for the wolf. So he said,

"Don't eat me up, wolf. I'll treat you to the choicest food instead."

"Where will you get it from?"

"My master is having company. There's a large heap of bones under the table — some of them with meat even. Come along."

"I'm afraid. They may kill me."

"No. They'll never kill you," the dog replied. "I'll slip you in so that no one suspects it."

Lyska left him behind in the passage, entered the hut, wagged his tail and put out the splinter lighting up the room.

"Now get under the table," he called out to the wolf.

The dog fed the wolf and even treated him to wine. They both sat quietly under the table chatting softly.

In the meantime the guests started singing merry songs.

The wolf pricked up his ears.

"I'd like to sing too," he said.

"Shush! Shush!" the dog warned.

The wolf held his tongue for a short while and then harped upon his crazy idea.

"I just can't hold myself back," he said, "my tongue is itching. I'm dying to sing."

And his mighty bass resounded through the hut,

"Aou — ou — ou!"

The dog could not restrain himself either and joined in,

"Bow — wow! Bow — wow!"

The guests heard this and started up, some grabbing pokes, some oven prongs. They beat the wolf almost to death and threw him out of the hut together with the dog.

When the wolf came to, he said to the dog,

"This is the way you fed me. I'll never forgive it to you!"

"You yourself are to blame," the dog said, "you ought to have kept quiet."

"No, no" the wolf objected. "You are to blame. What did you drag me into the hut for?"

They argued and argued and finally the wolf said,

"Then let us make war: whichever of us takes the upper hand will eat the other one up. Raise your army and come to the forest."

"All right," the dog agreed, "let it be so."

Next day he enlisted the ram, the cat and the rooster as his henchmen and set out to make war upon the wolf.

The wolf called on the bear, the boar and the hare to be his warriors. He led his army out on the edge of the forest and waited.

"You, Bruin," the wolf said to the bear, "climb up that fir-tree and have a look round — just see if the dog and his army aren't coming."

The bear climbed up the fir-tree, looked round and said,

"They're coming."

"Well, climb down then," the wolf called out, "we're going to fight."

"No, I won't climb down," the bear replied.

"Why?"

"I'm frightened."

"What kind of an army is it that makes you so frightened?" the wolf asked.

"That's an army the like of which I've never seen," the bear replied trembling like an aspen leaf. "One warrior is fat and shaggy and he walks with a fork; another is ferocious-looking and whiskered and he carries a pike behind him; the third wears a scarlet cap and has spurs on his feet and he is armed with a sabre. The first one keeps noddng his head and cries: 'Baaa-a! I'm going to stab you all, I'll prong you all with my folk!' The other keeps sniffing round angrily and murmurs: 'Let me get at you! I'll give you what-for!' And the third, such

a bully, keeps shouting: 'Just show me the way! I'll be able to get the better of 'em all, I — alone!'"

The boar heard all this and with haste buried himself in the moss up to his ears. And the wolf, seeing that he had not enough time to hide, stood up on his hind legs.

"Get behind me," he told the frightened hare.

"They'll take me for a tree-stump and pass us by."

The dog and his army made their appearance and found the place quite empty.

It so happened that at that very moment the ram felt one of his horns itching. He looked round noticed a tree-stump nearby. He made a dash for it and — bang! — ran his head against it. The wolf fell down dead on the spot. The hare freed himself from

under the wolf's dead body, but the dog saw him trying to escape and caught him at once.

As ill luck would have it, a fly settled on the boar's ear. He moved his ear slightly to brush it away but the cat imagined it was a mouse. He rushed at the moss heap and began to rake it out with his paws, his sharp claws rending the boar's flesh.

The boar put up with it for a few moments, then he started up and was off like a shot...

The rooster scared by the boar's flight flew up and, settling on the top of a fir-tree, raised a hulla-baloo,

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Where to?"

It occurred to the bear that the most formidable enemy warrior was having a go at him. And, frightened out of his wits, he tried to climb onto the topmost branch. The branch gave way, the bear tumbled down on the ground and broke his neck.

Since that time dogs have never been friends with wolves.

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